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ECSOMATIC EXPERIENCES AND  
RELATED PHENOMENA

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'In future chapters I shall give accounts of persons who have unusual mental characteristics as regards imagery, visualised numerals, colours connected with sounds and special associations of ideas, being unconscious of their peculiarities. . . . It will be seen in the end how greatly metaphysicians and psychologists may err, who assume their own operations, instincts, and axioms to be identical with those of the rest of mankind, instead of being special to themselves. The differences between men are profound, and we can only be saved from living in blind unconsciousness of our own mental peculiarities by the habit of informing ourselves as well as we can of those of others.'

GALTON,  
*Inquiries into Human Faculty*

I. INTRODUCTION

THE expression 'out-of-the-body experiences' has been used to apply to all or part of a very wide range of mental states. We shall adopt the term *ecsomatic* to denote this range in its entirety. The common factor of all ecsomatic states may be defined as follows:

- (A) The objects of perception, understanding and feeling are apparently organized in such a way as to constitute phenomena of a 'world' that is not physical; *or at any rate the observer*

*seems to himself to be observing them from a point of view which is not coincident with his physical body.*<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that this class includes phenomena so diverse as dreams, experiences of perceiving one's own body from outside, and certain types of mystical experience.

Ecsomatic experiences are continually being reported to the S.P.R., although in smaller numbers than, say, telepathic 'hunches' or precognitive dreams. The 300 cases analysed in the course of the 1959 *Spontaneous Cases Enquiry*, for example, included 53 precognitive dreams, 24 ESP intuitive 'hunches' and 6 'out-of-the-body experiences' (cf. Green, 1960). (Some of the 99 experiences which occurred during sleep and of the 40 which occurred between sleeping and waking could probably also have been classified as 'ecsomatic' if sufficiently detailed descriptions of them had been given by the percipients.)

The kind of ecsomatic experience in which the percipient appears to be located in a body apparently similar to his physical body has led to numerous theories throughout the ages. We may perhaps trace their influence in the ancient Egyptian concept of the Ka, as well as in modern spiritualist theories of an 'astral body' or 'etheric double'. It is convenient to have a single term for this striking class of experience, and we suggest the word *parasomatic*. A parasomatic experience will be taken to signify an ecsomatic experience in which the percipient is associated with a seemingly spatial entity with which he feels himself to be in the same kind of relationship as, in a normal state, he is with his

<sup>1</sup> This definition is adapted from that given by Dr J. H. M. Whiteman in his paper on '*The Process of Separation and Return in Experiences fully "Out-of-the-body"*', S.P.R. *Proceedings*, 50, Part 185, 1956. The considered definitions which he offers in the course of this paper have greatly clarified the situation in this hitherto confused field. My additions to Dr Whiteman's original definition (A) are given in italics, and are intended to avoid implying acceptance of Dr Whiteman's hypothesis of 'non-physical spaces', a discussion of which would fall outside the scope of the present paper.

Dr Whiteman added to (A), as a further general characteristic of all 'out-of-the-body' experience,

(B) 'The human (or other) form in which these faculties seem to be placed is also situated in that "world".'

This, however, appears to me to add little to characteristic (A), especially as, to include all ecsomatic states, the term 'form' would have to be understood in so extended a sense as to mean no more than 'focus of attention' or 'point of view'. To say that from a certain point of view we are observing events in a certain 'world' and to say that that point of view is in the world in question appear virtually equivalent expressions.

physical body. The spatial entity need not resemble the physical body, although cases are often reported in which it does.

The experience of apparently perceiving one's physical body from outside does not always occur in a parasomatic state, but is fairly commonly reported. We propose the term *autosopic* to qualify all out-of-the-body cases—parasomatic or otherwise—in which this characteristic is present.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Whiteman also distinguishes a class of ecsomatic states that he calls 'mystical'. Many, though not all, 'mystical' ecsomatic experiences are of the type in which the subject is temporarily unaware of being associated with any body or spatial entity at all (cf. *Case 19*, below), and we shall call states of this kind *asomatic*. Asomatic states are not necessarily 'mystical', but they form a much larger proportion of 'mystical' than of other ecsomatic experiences.

## II. BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT ENQUIRY

An earlier paper (Green, 1966) described how a group of 115 undergraduates at Southampton University were asked the question: 'Have you ever had an experience in which you felt you were "out of your body"?'—in answer to which question 22 subjects (or 19%<sup>2</sup> of the total population) said 'Yes'.

Since the writing of the earlier paper a virtually identical question (see below) has been put to a total of 380 undergraduates at Oxford University. These subjects have been volunteers for quantitative ESP experiments. Of these 380 subjects, 131 (34%) answered 'Yes' to the question: 'Have you ever had an experience in which you felt you were out of your body?' (We shall refer to this question as 'the initial question'.) 230 (61%) answered 'No' to this question and 19 (5%) responded by encircling a question mark.

The 131 subjects who answered 'Yes' were sent a questionnaire (to be called 'the ecsomatic questionnaire') bearing the following instructions: 'Could you describe this [ecsomatic] experience (or these experiences) on the back of this sheet? (By all means use extra paper for your account, or accounts, if you wish.) If

<sup>1</sup> It should perhaps be made clear that in proposing a new usage for the adjective *autosopic* to qualify certain kinds of ecsomatic experience we are not thereby proposing a new usage for the noun *autoscopy*, which is already used on occasion to refer to the experience of 'seeing one's double'.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage values in this section are given to the nearest whole number.

the following questions are not answered implicitly or explicitly in your written account, please answer them below:'.<sup>1</sup>

Four of the questions then asked were as follows: '(1)<sup>1</sup> How often have you had such experiences? If you have them regularly, can you indicate with what frequency they occur, on average? (2) Under what circumstances have such experiences occurred, in your case? (3) As far as you noticed, did the circumstances have anything in common? (4) What emotional accompaniment, if any, is there to the experience, in your case?' The remaining questions will be discussed below (Section IV).

19 completed questionnaires, accompanied by written accounts of the experience or experiences in question, were eventually collected. These cases will now be presented individually (Section III). The remaining questions of the ecsomatic questionnaire will then be discussed in relation to the cases as a whole (Section IV). Finally, the responses to the initial question will be analysed in relation to a number of discrete variables such as sex and academic background (Section V).

### III. CASES

#### 1. Cases Reported as Occurring during Sleep

The first case was received in the course of a separate investigation into *lucid dreams* (dreams in which the subject is aware that he is dreaming). The subject did not complete the ecsomatic questionnaire and is therefore not included among the 19 subjects whose answers are analysed collectively below (in Section IV).

##### Case I

It is about four months since I had such a dream. From what I can remember and this is obviously rather vague, I was struggling to free myself from a sense of impending danger—I seemed to know I was dreaming because I somehow could 'see' myself oppressed and weighted down by this claustrophobic feeling. I could as it were watch myself but only for a few minutes because then panic set in and I felt as if I would never be released from this drugged sort of oppression and struggled wildly. This led to my 'waking' properly. Felt rather 'scared'—it sounds silly but I felt almost as if I'd been in the grasp of forces whose origin I did not know.

On another occasion about 7 months ago—and this was absolutely terrifying—recalling the other dream has brought its memory back very vividly—I seemed to see myself again being grasped and oppressed by 'forces'—and this is the extraordinary thing—I felt as if I were rising to the top of the ceiling of my bedroom. I was almost convinced

<sup>1</sup> The questions were not numbered on the original questionnaire.

I was being dragged away—but I was aware in my mind that it was all a dream and that I must not worry or be scared—this did not prevent my feeling panic-stricken. I seemed to have a tremendous mental struggle to break the grip of these forces. I think I must have stopped dreaming through exhaustion and fell into a deep sleep from which I awoke with an awful head-ache.

The second paragraph of the next account is particularly reminiscent of the case of the Colonel (S.P.R. *Journ.* 48, pp. 209 f.) who during a crisis brought on by pneumonia and pleurisy found himself 'sitting on top of a high wardrobe near the door looking down on my bed at myself. . . .'

### *Case 2*

Mainly this experience has been in dreams. Although not frequent, I occasionally used to have an experience (when I was about 8) of feeling that I was floating about knee height off the floor with my feet raised up behind me. Here, I was rather looking at myself, than feeling it directly.

The other main one took the form of part of my consciousness floating up into the far corner of the room.

In both, I was dreaming, though sometimes the feeling, especially the second one lasted after I'd woken up and had slipped back into a doze. . . .

I have not, however, as far as I can remember, felt doubly conscious while fully awake.

In answer to the question concerning what emotional accompaniment there was to the experience, the subject of Case 2 said 'None', but added that 'for some reason these two dreams out of a small number which I can remember, have seemed to stick in my memory for a particularly long time'—which would seem to indicate that they were in some way exceptional.

### *Case 3*

Several dreams.

One when I was very young—I dreamt I fell (or rather I was pulled by some mysterious force, that seemed to get stronger the more I resisted—) over a cliff and died—I observed my dead body from apart. (This experience of being pulled toward a cliff edge, and of falling was very common in my younger dreams—eventually I learnt to levitate (in my dreams), which solved the problem.)

Another occasion, I left my sleeping body (in my dream) and floated about, apart from it.

Mrs H. O. Arnold-Forster (1921, p. 64 f.) also reported that in her dreams levitation evolved as a means of escape from threatening situations.

According to Havelock Ellis (1911), flying dreams are 'an interpretation—a misinterpretation from the stand-point of waking life—of actual internal sensations' (p. 134);—in particular, of sensations originating in the respiratory apparatus. He notes (p. 136) that a large number of people, especially young people, associate their dreams of flying with staircases [cf. Arnold-Forster, *loc. cit.*] and that 'the most frequent cause of cardiac and respiratory stimulation, especially in children, who constantly run up and down them, is furnished by staircases . . .' (p. 137). Ingenious though this argument may be, 'physiological' theories of dreaming in general scarcely seem adequate to account for the apparent responsiveness of flying dreams to purely psychological factors such as the volition of the subject.

The next subject also reports 'floating' dreams:

*Case 4*

. . . I was asleep at the time I felt I was out of my body i.e. a 'floating' dream. This as far as I can gather is quite a common dream associated with very deep sleep. This has happened a matter of about 12 times all together.

The last two cases differ from those usually discussed in books on dreaming in being ostensibly asomatic. In this connection it is interesting that Muldoon and Carrington (1950) give instructions for the cultivation of flying dreams, which they regard as likely to develop into ecsomatic states. Both Dr Whiteman and Dr van Eeden (1913) also mention flying and floating dreams as sometimes preceding states of separation and lucid dreaming.

*2. Reduced Sensory Input and the Hypnagogic State*

*Case 5*

What I was thinking of was the state I sometimes reach before going to sleep. When totally relaxed I lose all sense of proportion as regards my body and the room I am in so that I cannot tell whether my body is as long as my finger or my finger as long as my body and I can imagine that I could reach a wall perhaps 10-15 feet away simply by moving a finger. In this state, though my mind is still perfectly active I can also sometimes feel that I have no body at all. However I suspect that all this is simply the result of physical relaxation.

This last case might be called a case of distortion of the body-image, though the end-state resembles an asomatic state. As Eastman (1962) has pointed out, a characteristic of a number of published ecsomatic cases is that they occurred in states of reduced sensory input.

## Case 6

Sometimes to try and get to sleep I try to imagine that I am falling or that my feet are above my head. This leads to the feeling that my mind and body are drifting apart—usually my mind falling and my body staying where it is.

Though this subject speaks of his experience as being 'consciously induced' he adds that this is only possible when he is 'very tired'.

'Falling feelings' are also reported in connection with 'projection' experiments by a subject studied by the Institute. Of one such experiment this subject writes:

Having partially fasted for 24 hours, I lay down on my bed and concentrated. After a time the ticking of the clock became inaudible for short periods and during those periods I began to have sensations of falling. Eventually I seemed to fall completely through the bed and found myself in a room on which I had difficulty in focusing my attention. . . .

It seems possible that the falling feeling, at least for those who are able to induce it, might be a favourable *point d'appui* from which to attempt the induction of a full-scale ecsomatic state. Oliver Fox (1962) claimed that a relaxed and drowsy condition was favourable to the voluntary initiation of out-of-the-body states, and Muldoon speaks similarly of the hypnogogic and hypnopompic states. An example of an apparently spontaneous ecsomatic experience occurring in the hypnopompic state is that of Arnold-Forster described below:

The following note relates to an abnormal experience which occurred to me while in this (borderland) condition. It happened only once in my life; it seemed so different in nature from anything else that I had known and has remained so entirely outside all my ordinary experience that, although I now know that a similar thing has happened to others, I should have found it difficult to believe in it, if it had not happened to myself.

I awoke before six o'clock one morning in my London bedroom and lay quietly thinking in a mood of great stillness. Quite suddenly my spirit seemed to leave my body—at least it is only in such words as these that I can describe what happened. I found myself outside my body—but looking downwards from a little height above the foot of the bed at my own form lying there just below me. I saw O——, I saw my bed and the pale wall behind it, and the light window—I saw myself—but it was I, my own self, who looked on, who thought, and who in an instant was conscious of intolerable loneliness and of a great sense of desolation. . . . I felt that I could not bear the separation from everything I understood and loved—and I crept back shuddering into

my bodily existence. . . . By degrees the feeling of distress went away, and I was comforted when I realised how completely I had still been my own self whilst this happened; how unchanged my identity was during those moments when I was freed from my body and looked at it from the outside.

### *3. Cases Occurring under Conditions of Stress or Conflict*

The following case might have been included among the cases reported as occurring during sleep as the situations concerned are described as occurring in dreams:

#### *Case 7*

A variety of situations which are unpleasant because normal physical laws do not apply and I feel completely helpless—e.g. to escape from burning house. Sometimes merely puzzling if no danger to myself involved. Always inconclusive. Often involves physical situation e.g. with water where I may be swimming over a poorly defined stretch of water for a poorly defined reason, or some form of vague conflict (defensive) with other people. Sometimes social e.g. when I am confronted by a group of people united by some particular feeling e.g. mistrust and contempt.

The next case presents certain striking similarities to Case 10:

#### *Case 8*

Back in the days when I knew a good deal of the work necessary for an examination (e.g. High School) I found it easier to think of another question or some other topic while the conditioning . . . developed by study took over and provided the required answer. Often I seemed to become completely remote and finally would watch myself, as if from a great height, quite objectively. I later found that the panic induced by difficulty with a question could also produce this state. (It being possible to observe myself writing, etc.) I explain this as an attempt by the subconscious to remove as much of the human element as was possible from the business of answering questions, thus letting the part of me which knew the work to carry on unencumbered. (It was quite noticeable that in an essay type question the occurrence of the above usually resulted in a regurgitation of the given notes (in the order given) with little original thought or interpretation. Better answers were usually obtained by thinking out each step of the answer (often though, with a detrimental effect on retention of facts).)

The same subject also reports an ostensibly asomatic experience occurring during sleep:

#### *Case 9*

In a dream I once rode a bicycle into the front of a very large truck which killed me. I left my body, after which realisation, all thought



and recognition ceased (I took this to indicate my brain had stopped functioning), and I floated in a void, completely unchecked, and unable to distinguish things, or be distinguished. I don't know how long the dream persisted, only that when I awoke it stopped, and I don't think that it stopped before then.

The next case resembles Case 8.

#### *Case 10*

I have not infrequently had experiences in which I have felt 'outside' myself. In my judgement the experiences are directly linked to a strong emotion, in my case almost always either fear or embarrassment. Such experiences are mostly from school, e.g. being hauled over the coals by my headmaster or some senior person; I felt that my body was going through mechanical motions, while 'I' stood aloof, as an observer. Perhaps it is a form of wish-fulfilment; while other people wish they could 'fall through the floor' at embarrassing moments, I find I am (literally) detached. Whether or not the two phenomena are the same, I often feel that I am very small in embarrassing situations (perhaps an automatic hark-back to childhood?). Another notable thing is that at such moments the place where I feel 'I' am is above and behind me head, looking down on the action, but able to 'return' to myself at moments when active participation in the conversation is required. For this state is a very passive one, and occurs most when I am listening to some person who is angry with me.

Lastly, when I remember these situations I invariably see them from above and behind. I vividly remember at my first school, when playing football, I was passed the ball and instead of kicking it knelt down and stopped it with my hands; and I remember the situation as though I was standing behind dispassionately watching myself kneeling and pushing the football with both my hands.

The next subject remarks that his experiences have all taken place in a condition of 'physical exhaustion, *unaccompanied* by a mental fatigue'.

#### *Case 11*

I have had the experience of being remote or detached from my body on several occasions, all of which were cases of physical exhaustion, and one also of physical danger.

The last occasion in question was one on which the subject was in danger of drowning.

Some ecsomatic experiences appear to occur without any obvious precipitating cause. One such case is that reported by Mrs Arnold-Forster (reproduced above).

The subject of Case 7 also claimed to have had autoscopic experiences in the waking state 'a few times a week', which he

attributes to 'Imagination'. These he said had no emotional accompaniment at all.

*Case 12*

Generally I am standing up in some particular posture and surrounded by a group of other people. Nothing much happens. Largely volitional and for amusement.

The subject of Case 4 likewise said (referring to the question of whether his experiences were autoscopic, and apparently thinking of incidents occurring in the waking state):

*Case 13*

In fact this has happened once or twice and was a matter of complete indifference. Consciousness was confined to the 'floating self'.

The last case in this section exhibits a feature common to many published ecsomatic experiences: anxiety of the part of the subject to 're-enter' his body (cf. the case from *Phantasms of the Living* quoted in the section below headed 'Youth'; also the Arnold-Forster case above):

*Case 14*

These experiences invariably occur late at night, in the company of two or three other people, when I am rather tired and invariably during a philosophical discussion of existence. The experience usually lasts for about 5 mins. and takes the form of the feeling that some 'vital force' (for want of a better word) has left my body and is hovering above me watching my body go through its motions, I find it a rather frightening experience and have to exert considerable will-power in order to 're-unite' myself. This leaves me with a deep feeling of confusion and depression. I tend to avoid situations when it is likely to happen to me because I sometimes feel that I may not be able to 're-unite' myself in time. (Cf. Case 1, above.)

#### 4. *Youth*

The two cases that follow seem to be of particular interest in connection with the question of age and its relation to out-of-the-body states:

*Case 15*

The incident which I remember most clearly occurred on a summer evening when I was about 10 yrs old. I was at the birthday party of a friend who lived in the centre of Banbury. Before eating we went out into the town park; I remember particularly the grass slopes, a sandpit, shallow pool and the tower of St. Mary's; which showed over the trees.

The tower is domed and is built of dark ironstone. (I also remember the clock striking.) I suddenly felt detached from myself and from my friends in the sort of giddy feeling one has when slightly drunk but not merry, but I had had nothing to drink. Felt completely blank; no longer interested in anything; slightly deaf and sluggish in movement.

A feeling of apathy or disinterestedness is also reported by the subject of Case 23 below, and the presence of both 'a barrier to hearing' and some kind of locomotor deficiency is reported in Case 17. The present subject remarked that the incident had occurred on a 'hot day (although [it had] occurred in the evening)' and he thought it possible that the heat was in some way involved in its causation (cf. Case 17, below).

An out-of-the-body case appears in *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney *et al*, 1886) in which the subject (later Mrs Stone) was likewise only 9 or 10 years old. As this case has apparently received little attention we venture to reproduce it here:

When about 9 or 10 years old I was sent to a school in Dorchester as a day boarder; it was here my first curious experience occurred that I can clearly remember. I was in an upper room in the school, standing with some others, in a class opposite our teacher, Miss Mary Lock; suddenly I found myself by her side, and looking towards the class saw myself distinctly—a slim, pale girl, in a white frock and pinafore. I felt a strong anxiety to get back, as it were, but it seemed a violent and painful effort, almost a struggle, when accomplished. I was much frightened, but did not mention it till many years after [Vol. I, p. 555 n.].

Gurney adds:

I may mention that Mrs. Stone's daughter has had a similar experience; so that here is perhaps another example of hereditary tendency.

A notable feature of this case is the anxiety of the subject to return to her body. This seems to be a feature common to many involuntary or spontaneous ecsomatic experiences occurring to subjects in a normal state of health (cf. the Arnold-Forster case, and Case 1). On the other hand the subjects of what one might call crisis cases—in which the percipient is near to death, for example—seem more characteristically to feel a reluctance to return to the normal state. The Huguenot minister (*Proceedings* VII, p. 194 ff.) said that his 'grief was measureless' on perceiving that he was returning to his body. 'Ah! if only I had a hand and scissors to cut the thread which ties me still to it!'

In crisis cases, the subject is often in extreme pain before apparently leaving his body; one would like to know to what

extent this fact is responsible for his repugnance to the idea of return, and, if it is, to what extent this implies an 'unconscious awareness' of his bodily sensations while separated—and hence the operation of some mechanism of dissociation such as that occurring in certain subjects under hypnosis.

The subject of the next case would seem to have been even younger than Mrs Stone at the time of his experience:

*Case 16*

An isolated incident at the age of 7 or 8. I clearly remember standing at the top of the stairs one sunny afternoon, a little bored and looking for diversions. Noticing a sunbeam delimited by dust motes I became more and more convinced that it was a solid object and I distinctly remember the sensation of me (the essential me) rising up and floating down the sunbeam as gently as the Thistledown falls: I reached the bottom without a suspicion of a bump and was immediately aware of being bebodyied again.

It is noteworthy that this subject—like many of the subjects of published ecsomatic cases—described his experience as an isolated (and distinctly memorable) one.

The subject remarked that there had been a 'sense of liberation' accompanying the experience.

5. *Multiple Consciousness*

The first case under this heading occurred to a subject apparently suffering from sunstroke, combined with 'a cold in the head'.

*Case 17*

The experience was one of a split in three directions. It occurred when I was on the point of fainting and lasted about 2 or 3 minutes (during which time I recovered). I felt as if my body was separate from my mind and that my mind was further split into two—an 'external' and an 'internal' mind, thus there was a 3-way split. The 'external' mind became the observer, duly noting the reactions of the 'internal' mind, and the physical effects of fainting on the 'internal' mind. Thus the 'external' mind noted a floating sensation and a loss of sense of balance; a lack of control over the body (particularly round the neck and knees); the presence of some barrier to hearing [cf. Case 15]; a dislocation between my speech and myself speaking; an increased awareness of my own reactions and at the same time a continued (dimmed) awareness of other people's reactions (as if the people were characters in a dream); and above all a feeling of astonishment that this was happening to me.

A similar '3-way split' is reported by the armoured car officer whose experience is printed in *Journal* 34 (pp. 207 f). He writes:

... a curious characteristic of my experience was that at one time I seemed to be able to see the scene from a number of different viewpoints all at the same time. That is to say, while I was floating above my body, I was conscious of doing so, and of the view about me including my own body on the ground, yet I was also conscious of a much weaker (to use an inapt adjective) comprehension, and that was from the side, where I could make out both the ground body and also the airborne body, though that may well be due to efforts to visualise the whole scene afterwards. The body on the ground was only conscious of the flames, and of the urgency of the moment.

The subject of the next case also reports an apparent bilocation of consciousness (occurring in dreams):

*Case 18*

... I have experienced this (in dreams) i.e., looking down and seeing myself in a dream. ... For instance, a couple of nights ago, I dreamed I was reading a story, and at the same time I could see myself taking part in the action of the story, and both my 'bodies' had their own minds and consciousnesses—each my own though.

## *6. Religious or Quasi-Religious Experiences*

*Case 19*

On one occasion only have I had any experience in which I felt that I was out of my body.

In my case the experience was what I believe to be 'The Baptism in the Holy Spirit'—an experience promised by the Lord Jesus to His disciples (Acts. 1.8). On Oct. 7th 1963 in my own church (Baptist) prayer-meeting I began to pray for this experience, believing God wanted me to have it. As I prayed my voice began to rise and attained such a degree of intensity and volume that it seemed to fill the whole building (not a large one). At the same time I was aware of a climbing sensation within me, as if my soul/spirit/what-have-you [cf. Mrs Arnold-Forster], was reaching up and out after God. I'm not aware of seeing myself from the outside, as it were—I was just conscious of being in a super-normal (supra-normal?) condition.

There was a certain degree of emotional accompaniment to the experience, and this I think was wrong. The experience was so overwhelming I allowed my emotions to gain supreme place in my being, and they found expression in a few tears as I sat down again. I feel now that had I retained control of my emotions and allowed God to have full control over my being, that the experience would have found expression in glossalalia, or 'speaking with tongues'. I did not experience glossalalia for another 16 months, but since then I have spoken in tongues frequently.

I have never had this experience in exactly the same way, but both

at the time and while I have been speaking in tongues, I have been aware of a sense of liberation, and sometimes of elation.

One is reminded of St Paul's phrase, 'whether in the body I know not or whether out of the body I know not' (II Cor, 12, 1-7). The subject maintained that the experience had occurred 'in a *normal* church prayer-meeting—there was no deliberately stirred-up emotionalism'.

The next subject claimed to experience what might be called an asomatic state about 'once a month, on average'.

#### *Case 20*

Sense of floating, loss of sense of touch—feeling of merging with atmosphere, and spreading out—'me' disappears, and there is a feeling of the world consisting merely of waves of energy, all connected—my brain included. It is almost a 'religious experience', although I am not a Christian nor do I believe in God.

This subject commented that a 'loss of normal interests and pre-occupations' was common to his experiences. In answer to the question, 'What emotional accompaniment is there to the experience, in your case?', he wrote: 'Awe, wonder, delight. But terrible fear once or twice—I felt "lost" '.

### *7. Other Cases*

In the next case the onset of the experience seems to be characterized by a feeling similar to that reported by Mrs Piper in connection with her entry into trance; she said, 'people and objects become smaller until they finally disappear' (Piper, 1929, p. 67).

#### *Case 21*

In all cases the sensation are the same. Objects (including people) appear to recede, both in presence and slightly in size and volume (of noise); sometimes I hear the kind of silence one hears from a radio when something is going to happen but hasn't yet; totally different from a mere absence of sound.

On the other hand, this retreating effect, makes them strange, and therefore makes me concentrate on them, until my eyes defocus (I am very short-sighted in one eye and can defocus at will sometimes) and they then do not appear to be there, though I cannot see them anyway. I (i.e. my mind) am nothing to do with my body; I watch with a half-attentive concentration my hands move; they appear to be driven by something else. I do not have a sensation of movement; I seem to be separate in all dimensions from the surrounding world which does not really seem anything to do with me. My voice sounds strange and

nothing to do with me; (I have noticed a similar effect sometimes when singing in a crowded hall when nervous before an audience, or acting) [cf. Case 10]. The strange thing is (and the only sensation that puzzles me at all in the rest which does not perturb me in the least) that while I know what my body is doing and can even in some way perceive it, I cannot *see* it; I have no visual impression of the whole, but feel as if I am above or behind it [cf. Case 10] all the time.

In answer to the question concerning the emotional characteristic of his experience this subject wrote: 'Only surprise, rarely fright'.

The second paragraph of the next account seems to be the converse, in a sense, of the following well-known passage from Tennyson: 'A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through *repeating my own name* to myself silently till, all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being; and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life.' (Tennyson, 1897, Vol. II, p. 320.)

### *Case 22*

To induce this experience I need to be relaxed and peaceful—sometimes by looking at an object long enough its reality becomes diminished; I have to pull myself together and ask 'What is it?'. In that sense I am always aware of my surroundings—it's never a trance-like state of complete oblivion—though it may take a few seconds for me to collect my thoughts and reassure myself by saying that the object I have been looking at is a picture of . . . etc. I can always remember such details eventually, which sometimes surprises me, for I feel so completely remote from my surroundings in a sort of timeless void.

I can usually recall myself repeating several times, come, you still exist, your name is —, you live at — and other such concrete details; then gradually the feeling becomes less acute.

Another thing—I can feel the experience growing on me—each successive state becomes more acute, a more total sinking into this void. It never comes completely in a split second but steadily reaches a peak before diminishing. . . . As you probably realise it is a tremendously difficult feeling to describe.

This subject remarked: 'I can often induce such experiences merely by thinking about them—their strangeness'. On other occasions 'they . . . come quite suddenly and unexpectedly'.

Of the experiences in general he said, 'I certainly feel outside myself but I never lose control of my body or of my reasoning faculties—though they may be retarded'. Emotionally, they are characterised by 'slight alarm—but I'm now so used to them that I don't even experience this always'.

The next and final case is as follows:

*Case 23*

For some reason very difficult to describe.

I felt 'detached'. Undertones of fatalistic apathy—ability to concentrate and weigh things up not lost. (For instance, I clearly remember being concerned in case the people around me realised I was in this state.) The occasions are almost commonplace now though still rare and well separated. However they don't disturb me at all. . . . The other characteristics are a complete lack of the emotion of fear. . . .

Tiredness, lack of interest in a speaker and lack of physical movement and I am potentially more likely to find myself in this state. Also lack of interest after a period of mental effort has had the same effect. Or boring repetitive physical work. . . .

#### IV. COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF ANSWERS TO INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

1. *While apparently out of your body, did you seem to 'see' your body as would any other external spectator?*

One subject (Case 2) failed to answer this question, while in relation to Case 5 the question was inapplicable, since the experience was, if anything, asomatic. The remaining subjects were about equally divided on the point in question. Nine said 'Yes' and eight said 'No'. Those who answered in the affirmative included the subjects of Cases 3, 4, 7, 8, 14, 17 and 18. The subject of Case 20 said in answer to this question 'Once, yes—it was as if I was at the top of a huge cathedral looking down on my body, wrapped in a shroud, below.'

2. *During the experience, did your consciousness appear to be located in two places at once?*

The subjects of the two cases discussed under the heading 'Multiple Consciousness' both said 'Yes' to this question; however, one of them, the subject of Case 17, added in parenthesis: '. . . But not located in two places in a physical sense of place'. The subject of Case 7 said 'Yes' with respect to the experiences occurring in dreams, but 'No' with respect to those occurring in the waking state. Altogether some 6 subjects gave a more or less qualified



positive answer to this question. 11 gave a negative answer. The remainder were not clearly classifiable; the subject of Case 22, for instance, answered: 'To some extent; located in both 'mind' and 'body', with the former very much predominating'.

3. *Do you think that you have ever got any information during such an experience that you could not have got by ordinary means?—i.e. do you think you have ever experienced any form of ESP (telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition) during such an experience?*

Two subjects answered 'Yes' to this question. However, one (the subject of Case 6) referred to phenomena whose occurrence was not restricted to the ecsomatic state. The other was the subject of Case 20. He reported having 'once or twice' experienced what he thought was ESP in relation to another person (not said to be the same one on each occasion) while in the ecsomatic state. An interesting condition of these occurrences was that the other person concerned was 'in the same state' as himself.

The subject of Case 19 remarked that 'since the experience I have had an awareness of things about to happen—generally the conversion of other people'.

4. *Do you suffer from migraine?*

In view of the phenomena (in some cases ostensibly resembling ecsomatic experiences) reported in the clinical literature in connection with migraine (cf. Eastman, 1962) it was thought of interest to determine whether any of the present subjects were migraine sufferers.

All except one subject answered this question. 16 said 'No', and two said 'once' and 'rarely', respectively, so could scarcely be called 'sufferers'. The subject of Case 10 said that he had had attacks of apparent migraine in 1961, but that this was a symptom of a pituitary cyst, since removed. The subject of Case 21 remarked that his father and grandfather both suffered from migraine so that he might be predisposed to develop this syndrome at some later date. The only subject to say 'Yes' was the subject of Case 5.

5. *Do you have any explanation for the experience?*

A consistent agnosticism was noticeable in the responses to this question. Only 3 subjects gave anything but a negative answer. One of these was the subject of Case 8 who did not add anything to what has already been printed above.

Only the subjects of Cases 6 and 23 were inclined to ascribe their experiences to 'tricks of the imagination'. The subject of Case 16 definitely remarked 'I like to think it happened'.

One subject (that of Case 11) alluded to Aldous Huxley's theories in *Heaven and Hell* which he said 'seem quite reasonable', but he did not say how he applied them to his own case.

6. *Do you know anyone else who has such experiences, and if so would they be willing to answer this questionnaire?*

5 people did not reply to this question, but in context this would seem to indicate that they did not know of anyone appropriate. Of the remainder, the majority (9) said 'No', apparently intending a negative answer to the first part of the question. One of those who said 'No' (the subject of Case 23) said he was making enquiries among his friends, but no more was heard of this. 5 subjects said 'Yes' to the first part of the question, but 2 of them had in mind people who had already received the questionnaire. Another 2 claimed to know of people who were not prepared to answer the questionnaire. This left only one subject who gave the name of another person he thought suitable.

Overall, one is left with the impression that at least the majority of the 19 subjects reported on in the present paper thought that they were exceptional as far as the experiences they reported were concerned. (This is not the case, for example, with the *Déjà Vu* phenomenon, cf. Green, 1966.)

## V. OTHER VARIABLES

### 1. *Sociological and Psychological Factors*

No significant difference (on the  $\chi^2$  test) was found between 'Arts' and 'Science' subjects, or between Men and Women, with regard to the number of people answering 'Yes' to the initial question. This result is consistent with the findings of the Southampton experiment (Green, 1966). Nor, in the present experiment, was any significant difference observed between Scholars and Commoners, or those from State Schools and those from Public Schools.

### 2. *'ESP' Experiences*

282 of the present subjects had also been asked the question: 'Have you ever had an experience which you felt could only be attributed to ESP?' Of 85 people who answered 'Yes' to the initial question 53 claimed to have had an experience which they had felt could only be attributed to ESP; only 42 of the 197 subjects who said 'No' to the initial question made such a claim. This difference is highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 42.937, p < 0.000,000,001$ ).

At first sight this result might seem to suggest that people who are liable to apparent displacements of consciousness are also more liable to spontaneous experiences of apparent ESP. However, there are a number of other possible explanations of the result; for example, it is possible that when people say 'Yes' to the question concerning putative ESP experiences, the experiences they have in mind are ecsomatic ones. Two facts tell against this hypothesis, however. The first is one mentioned above, namely, that only one of the 19 subjects who returned a completed out-of-the-body questionnaire associated his ecsomatic experience at all specifically with ESP. Secondly, in the case of 3 of the 19 subjects reported on above, data have been collected concerning their ostensible ESP experiences and in no case are these ecsomatic.

196 of those who answered the initial question had also been asked the following question in connection with their participation in card-guessing experiments: 'Do you think you are capable of ESP under the conditions of the present experiment?' 41 (20.92%) said 'Yes' to this question ('Sheep') and 155 (79.08%) said 'No' ('Goats'). 17 (41.46%) of the 'Sheep' claimed to have had an experience they had attributed to ESP, while only 35 (22.58%) of the 'Goats' made a similar claim. This difference is significant at the 0.05 level ( $\chi^2 = 5.002$ ,  $0.02 < p < 0.05$ ). It seems possible, therefore, that an apparent ESP experience predisposes a subject to consider himself a 'Sheep' in card-guessing situations—at least on the present criterion of 'Sheep'.

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#### POSTSCRIPT

Professor Price has pointed out, in a personal communication, that there are various points in connection with out-of-the-body cases on which it would be interesting to have more information. The points he mentions include: (1) the relationship which the percipient feels himself to have with his seeming body in parasomatic experiences, including kinaesthetic sensation; (2) the possibility of 'visiting' distant places, whether these contain an element

of apparent ESP or are purely symbolic; (3) the effect of such experiences on the subject's attitude to death.

The cases discussed in the above paper did not permit much to be said on any of these points, but since it was written a nationwide Appeal for first-hand accounts of ectosomatic experiences has resulted in the Institute's receiving nearly 1000 cases. These include material on which an interesting study of factors connected with topics (1), (2) and (3) could be carried out.

The national survey has also revealed a remarkable relationship between the fact of a person's having experienced an out-of-the-body state, and the fact of his having had an experience of apparent ESP in a 'conventional' form. This unexpected relationship between out-of-the-body experiences and ESP, occurring separately but in the same individual, is of particular interest in connection with the very low  $p$ -value cited at the conclusion of the above paper.

Professor Price points out that out-of-the-body experiences are usually visual. It is interesting to observe that the visual mode also predominates in the hallucinations involved in 'spontaneous cases', whereas in the hallucinations of the insane the auditory mode predominates. It would be interesting to extend this line of enquiry, as well as research on topics (1), (2) and (3), if resources should become available.

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## A CASE OF HAUNTING IN KENT

by ANDREW MACKENZIE

### I. INTRODUCTION

EARLY in 1963, when I was seeking material in the offices of the S.P.R. for a book I was writing on spontaneous cases<sup>1</sup> I was shown a packet relating to Cleve Court, near Minster, Kent, where Lady Carson was reported to have seen an apparition in December, 1949. This packet contained a number of newspaper cuttings of the time, some correspondence with Lady Carson, and a copy of a most interesting letter which she had received after a report of her experience had appeared in the Press and which she had forwarded to the S.P.R. This letter was copied before being returned to her.

I gathered from the newspaper cuttings that the Hon. Edward Carson, the Carsons' son, had seen the apparition when he was a child and that his wife had had a strange experience in the house in 1949, being alarmed by the sound of footsteps although no-one was visible.

As I had not then met Lady Carson I decided to make a start by writing to Mr Edward Carson asking for an account of his experiences as a child. He sent my letter to his mother, who invited me to Cleve Court to discuss the case. We did this over lunch and inspected the house together, particularly the Elizabethan section, where much of the phenomena had occurred. Lady Carson gave me some additional details of the strange events that had occurred in the house. She said that both she and the late Lord Carson had been disturbed by the sound of footsteps, such as might have been made by a woman wearing high-heeled shoes, and taps on doors, a woman guest had been disturbed by loud noises overhead; in addition to Edward Carson two other young children had reported seeing what was apparently an apparition; and the family doctor had had a strange experience involving, apparently, retrocognition. However, the sounds of footsteps and taps had stopped in 1949 and the apparition had not been reported since then.

The apparition seen indoors was that of a woman, but the

<sup>1</sup> *The Unexplained*, Arthur Barker, London, 1966. See *Journal*, March 1967, pp. 38-41.—Ed.